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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR UNSC DEBATE ON UNAMA MANDATE
RENEWAL

¶1. The Department instructs USUN to draw on the following points below for its participation in the March 19 UNSC debate on the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

¶2. Begin points:

-- The United States supports the renewal of UNAMA's mandate in Afghanistan for 12 months beginning on / about March 20, 2009. The United States strongly endorses continuation of the imperative described in UNSC 1806 to support UNAMA's leadership to improve aid effectiveness. We welcome UNAMA's leadership in coordinating international assistance efforts and improving collaboration between civilian and military operations.

-- The UN, NATO, and other contributors have an important role in increasing security, helping build the Afghan government's capacities, expanding economic opportunity, and strengthening the justice system.

-- The United States welcomes the UN General Assembly's approval of the 2009 budget for UNAMA of \$168 million, and the authority to hire 437 new staff and expand the mission to four new offices this year. These resources are critical if UNAMA is to fulfill its mandate and coordinating role. The United States urges the UN to expedite funding to UNAMA, and encourages member States to provide appropriately qualified staff to help fill the new staff positions. The U.S. will work closely with the Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) Kai Eide and his staff to assist implementation of the UNAMA mandate.

-- The Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan: The United States thanks the Secretary-General for his report on Afghanistan. We offer comments on several items discussed in the report. We also look forward to future reporting that describes progress against agreed benchmarks.

-- Civilian assistance is critical to success in Afghanistan: The United States agrees with the report's assessment that we cannot solve the problem of the Taliban and the spread of extremism in the region solely through military means. We are encouraged by the formation of the Integrated Approach Working Group and look forward to receiving further reports of its progress in completing needs assessments and delivering assistance.

-- Upcoming elections, the key strategic event in Afghanistan in 2009: We support an open and fair election in which the people of Afghanistan choose their own leader, free of intimidation. We appreciate the efforts

by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Afghanistan, the United Nations, international donors, and Afghan and international security forces to confront difficult challenges in preparing for these elections. The United States supports the IEC's decision to hold elections on August 20 to maximize the election's universality, fairness, and transparency, and calls upon Afghanistan's leaders to find a solution within the Constitutional framework for ensuring the continuity, legitimacy and stability of government through completion of the election process. Funding for these elections needs to be urgently addressed. The IEC presented a budget of \$224 million to resource the electoral process properly. Donors need to follow-through on their pledges with actual donations to the United Nations as soon as possible.

-- Good governance and anti-corruption: There will be no sustained progress in Afghanistan, no matter how many troops are sent and how much money is spent, if there is no substantial progress on Afghan capacity for governance. This will come first and foremost from the government and the people of Afghanistan, with our continued support. Corruption is a major challenge to better governance in Afghanistan and one of the main concerns of the Afghan population. Corruption undermines our efforts to help build an impartial and fair government that delivers services to all citizens equally and without regard for their wealth or access. We need to see progress from the Afghan government in fighting corruption, expanding the reach of central government and strengthening local governance while creating economic opportunities.

-- Human rights: We share the concerns outlined in the report regarding the deteriorating human rights situation. We note with particular concern the impact that discriminatory laws and practices are having on women and children. We are encouraged by the steps the Afghan government has taken to implement the National Action Plan for Women, but we are in full agreement that much more needs to be done. The United States has trained over 3,000 women teachers in the last year, and supports higher education for women at the University of Kabul. We are also training over 22,000 women to support the conduct of elections. The United States welcomes the SRSG's views on how UNAMA and the international community might better cooperate with the Afghan government to meet the needs of women and girls with regard to education, health care, economic opportunity, justice and leadership.

-- Civilian casualties: The United States, NATO Allies and coalition partners deeply regret any loss of civilian lives. International forces take extraordinary steps to avoid civilian casualties. This is in sharp contrast to the Taliban who deliberately attack and endanger civilians. The International Security Assistance Force issued a directive in December 2008 specifically aimed at reducing the number of civilian casualties resulting from Operations. As a result, cooperation has improved between the Afghan government and international forces. When incidents occur that may involve civilian casualties, joint Afghan and international teams quickly investigate and compensate victims when appropriate.

-- Counter-narcotics efforts: We are encouraged by the forecast of the 2009 Afghanistan UN Office of Drug Control (UNODC) Opium Winter Rapid Assessment, which projects a possible further decrease in opium cultivation in 2009 (as high as 30 percent according to UN estimates). However, the drug threat in Afghanistan remains unacceptably high and will require a long term commitment by both the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. We are particularly concerned by the deteriorating security conditions in the south, where the insurgency dominates and where 98 percent of Afghanistan's poppy is now grown.

-- March 31st conference on Afghanistan: We appreciate the UN's role in co-chairing, along with the Netherlands and the Government of Afghanistan, the March 31 International Conference on Afghanistan. We look forward to re-confirming broad international consensus on supporting Afghanistan, as embodied in the Afghanistan Compact of 2006. We particularly look forward to a dialogue on improving aid effectiveness to achieve Government of Afghanistan priorities for improved security, governance and economic growth.

End Points.

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